



Illinois Department of Natural Resources

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Kaskaskia Site to Mark Independence Day and Anniversary of Liberation During the American Revolution

KASKASKIA, Ill. – The public is invited to attend the 51st annual patriotic ceremony celebrating our nation's independence Sunday, July 4, 2021 at 1:00 p.m. at the Kaskaskia Bell State Memorial on Kaskaskia Island in southwest Illinois.

The Kaskaskia Bell State Memorial houses the “Liberty Bell of the West” which was cast in 1741 and was presented by France as a gift to the Catholic Church of the Illinois Country. Originally located at the Immaculate Conception Parish at Kaskaskia, the bell was rung by villagers to celebrate their July 4, 1778 liberation from the British by American Colonel George Rogers Clark. In later years, it became known as the “Liberty Bell of the West.”

This year's July 4 program will feature remarks by historian Stephen Kling of St. Louis, who served as editor and co-author of *The Great Northern War Compendium*, co-author of *The Battle of St. Louis, The Attack on Cahokia, and the American Revolution in the West*, and recently published *Cavalry in the Wilderness*, a study of cavalry in the western theater of the Revolutionary War.

The program will also remember Donald Welge for his work organizing and promoting the Kaskaskia Independence Day celebration for 50 years. Mr. Welge passed away in 2020.

Music will be performed by the Chester Municipal Band with vocalist Melody Colonel. A rifle volley from historic interpreters Les Compagnie Franche de La Marine at de Fort de Chartres will accompany the patriotic celebration. A plate lunch, sandwiches and other refreshments will be available. Visitors are asked to bring lawn chairs for the program.

The Chester Veterans of Foreign Wars and American Legion, the City of Chester, area scout troops, the Kaskaskia Church Foundation, and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) are hosts of the Independence Day Celebration.

Kaskaskia Bell Historic State Memorial, administered by the IDNR, is located on an island in the Mississippi River about 60 miles southeast of St. Louis. The town was once physically connected to the rest of Illinois by a peninsula until the Mississippi River changed course in 1881. Kaskaskia Bell State Memorial is reachable by land only from Missouri. Visitors can access the site through St. Mary, Missouri; take Missouri Highway 61 to the Old Channel Bridge, turn east, then follow Kaskaskia Bell markers for approximately 5 miles to the state memorial site.

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